IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 3-4, 10, and 12-13 without prejudice.

Please amend claims 1, 6, and 11.

Please enter the pending claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus comprising:

an opaque plate;

a central opening disposed in said opaque plate; and

at least one peripheral opening disposed away from said central opening in said opaque plate wherein said at least one peripheral opening comprises at least one annular opening.

2. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said central opening is circular.

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Cancelled)

5. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said at least one peripheral opening further comprises a filter.

6. (Currently Amended) An apparatus comprising:

a source of light;

optical elements; and

an aperture, said aperture comprising:

an opaque plate;

a central opening disposed in said opaque plate; and

at least one peripheral opening disposed away from said central opening in said opaque plate <u>wherein a filter may reduce intensity of said light passing through said at least one peripheral opening with respect to said light passing through said central opening</u>.

7. (Original) The apparatus of claim 6 wherein said central opening is circular.

8. (Original) The apparatus of claim 6 wherein said at least one peripheral opening comprises at least one annular opening.

9. (Original) The apparatus of claim 6 wherein said at least one peripheral opening comprises four openings equidistant from said central opening.

10. (Cancelled)

11. (Currently Amended) A method comprising:

providing an illumination beam;

forming an on-axis component of said illumination beam;

forming at least one off-axis component of said illumination beam wherein said at least one off-axis component of said illumination beam is annular; and

combining said on-axis component and said at least one off-axis component into an exposure beam.

12-13. (Cancelled)

14. (Original) The method of claim 11 further comprising modulating intensity of said at least one off-axis component of said illumination beam.

15. (Original) The method of claim 11 further comprising modulating intensity of said on-axis component of said illumination beam.